



Kentucky Fish & Wildlife Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

June 2007 • Vol. 2, No. 6

Remembering Doug Travis, longest serving employee in state government



Governor Fletcher and Doug Travis at the dedication of Doug Travis WMA in December 2006.

Conservation educator Doug Travis, the longest serving employee in Kentucky state government, died at his Paducah home Thursday, June 14. He was 88.

Travis began his career with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources as a conservation officer in 1947. The following year, he transferred to a conservation educator position with the department, where over the course of his 59-year career he taught more than 300,000 kids the basics of hunting, fishing, swimming and marksmanship at schools and conservation camp in western Kentucky.

"Kentuckians across the Commonwealth are mourning the loss of one of our greatest citizens, Doug Travis," said Gov. Ernie Fletcher. "Mr. Travis touched the lives of thousands of Kentuckians during his nearly 60 years with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, teaching them how to use our resources wisely and about the importance of conservation. He devoted his life to serving Kentucky, and in doing so made our Commonwealth a better place in so many ways. Glenna and I extend our deepest sympathies to Mr. Travis' family and friends during this dif-

ficult time."

A native of Marion, Ky., Travis fought 147 bouts as a Golden Gloves boxer, served as a small arms instructor for the U.S. Army during World War II, became the department's first firearms instructor in 1952, and served as director of Camp John W. Currie from 1975-2000. Travis is credited for helping start Kentucky's first modern bow season for deer, and was instrumental in the formation of the department's Greenwing Adventure program for youth waterfowl hunters.

Jay Webb, assistant director of the department's Information and Education Division, said Travis loved the outdoors so much that he wanted to share it with others, even as his health declined in later years. "Doug looked forward to putting on his uniform every morning and going out to help people," said Webb. "He was Fish and Wildlife. Doug defined his job and his job defined him. They were one and the same. He lived his dream."

Harold Knight, who built a nationally known game call company with partner David Hale, said Travis was a major influence in his career. Knight was 11 years old when he first met Travis at Camp Currie. It started a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

"I always said that if you didn't like Doug Travis, you didn't like your own mama. He was that good with people," Knight said. "A lot of people might have retired when they got in their sixties, but Doug did it up into his eighties. It's remarkable that he had that drive and wanted to help kids to the very end."

See "Travis," page 7.

Commission formally adopts long-range Strategic Plan

The KDFWR Commission formally adopted the long range Strategic Plan at its June 8 meeting that will guide the department into the next decade and perhaps beyond, capping a year-long plan development process that included input from the commission, hunters, anglers, boaters and employees.

During the plan development process, the department sought to renew its vision for the future, evaluate its core values, re-define its mission, and establish goals and objectives.

The Department Planning Team could not have made it to this point without the input, vision, and honesty from our employees. We appreciate the input from employees and the general public through the long process.

This included approximately three full months of website review, seven public meetings across the state and 12 employee planning sessions. "Kentucky Afield" television aired an episode about the purpose and responsibilities of KDFWR and its specific plan to build "A Better Future for Kentucky's Wildlife."

The adopted strategic plan is based on input received from all of these venues.

Beginning July 1, the approved Strategic Plan will help guide the agency's focus, decisions and budgets. Employees are encouraged to continue to provide input in developing and implementing specific strategies to achieve our goals and objectives.

One priority will be the revitalization of small game populations in Kentucky. We will focus our budget, our personnel and our resources toward growing the kind of landscape that will help rabbits, quail, grouse and other small wildlife flourish.

Another will be youth recruitment.

See "Plan," page 4.



Ohio River to receive supplemental largemouth bass fingerlings

Fisheries research biologists began the first year of a three year stocking effort looking at the effectiveness of stocking supplemental largemouth bass fingerlings into embayments of the Ohio River.

Approximately 200,000 largemouth bass fingerlings (2.0 inches) will be stocked annually into the Markland pool of the Ohio River over the next three years. In total, approximately 16 embayments and backwater areas between Markland and Meldahl dams will be stocked with hatchery-reared largemouth bass.

Markland pool was chosen as the study area because it contains numerous embayments and backwater areas, suitable for largemouth bass stocking, compared to other pools of the Ohio River.

The study will be evaluated over the course of five years to assess the overall success of the stocking efforts and whether these fish can improve angler catch rates of largemouth bass in the Ohio River.

Largemouth bass reproduction in the Ohio River is often poor due to a variety of factors including lack of spawning habitat, lack of nursery habitat for young bass to forage and seek shelter, sedimentation, and fluctuations in water levels. Stocked, fingerling largemouth bass will be marked so that research biologists will be able to determine the amount of contribution

these fish provide to the total largemouth bass population present in Markland pool.

Largemouth bass grow quickly in the Ohio River, and reach 12.0 inches (the legal harvest size) by age-3. With good survival, anglers should begin to see increases in their catch as early as the spring of 2009.

Donations from several local bass tournaments will help pay the costs of rearing these largemouth bass over the next three years. Dixie Marine located in Fairfield, Ohio will donate \$10,000 a year for the next three years, while B & J Marina and Early Times Bourbon together donated \$3,000 from their Early Times Derby Tournament. These donations will make up a significant portion of the costs of rearing the largemouth bass that will be stocked in Markland pool.

These donations are a great way for tournament bass anglers and fisheries biologists to work collectively to help improve the largemouth bass fishing on the Ohio River.

This project is a joint effort between Doug Henley (Ohio River Research Biologist) and Chris Hickey (Black Bass Research Biologist).

For more information, please contact either Henley or Hickey at (502) 564-3400.



Left to right: Conservation Officer Richard Waite II, Mr. Glenn Byrd, Governor Ernie Fletcher, Aquatic Education Interim Betty Lewis.

Gov. Fletcher visits Jackson County Hooked on Fishing – Not on Drugs event

On Saturday April 28, 2007, Kentucky Governor Ernie Fletcher paid a surprise visit to a Hooked on Fishing - Not on Drugs® (HOFNOD) fishing event in Jackson County.

Wildlife and Boating Officer Richard Waite II was present and helped the roughly 100 children from surrounding communities bait hooks and catch fish. On this picture-perfect day the fish were cooperative all day long.

The governor stopped by at noon and addressed the group on the importance of making healthy choices like fishing and exercising instead of turning to drugs, smoking, or using alcohol.

He thanked all the volunteers who were there for helping make the day possible and took time to walk around the pond and visit with the children and families present. He posed for photographs before wishing everyone a great day of fishing and continuing on his way.

The Hooked on Fishing - Not on Drugs program is used in partnership primarily with Operation UNITE (Unlawful Narcotics Investigation, Treatment, and Education). UNITE serves 29 counties of southeastern Kentucky where acute

drug problems are destroying families and whole communities.

HOFNOD is one of the primary education tools of the program. Fishing programs are also used to give parents in treatment an opportunity to spend supervised time with their children.

Marc Johnson is the State Coordinator for the program and interim Betty Lewis serves on the HOFNOD Advisory Board. Together they trained Mr. Glenn Byrd and his wife Leona at a 2006 workshop in Lewes, Delaware where teams from all over the nation were prepared to train others to use the curriculum in their respective states. The 4 components of the curriculum are Life Skills, Fish Biology, Angling Skills, and Human Dimensions.

This was the first of many HOFNOD fishing events of the new year to be hosted by the Byrds. Through the Aquatic Education Program, the KDFWR provides material, technical, and sometimes personnel support for this and many such events around the state. For more information on the HOFNOD program, see the website at www.futurefisherman.org/programs/hofnod.php or contact Marc Johnson at ext. 470.

New KDFWR employees

Even as two long-time employees retire, the Division of Information and Education is welcoming three new employees.

Long time employee Phil Glass retired in June. Phil was a Conservation Education Program Leader in the Somerset area. Phil served the department as an educator for many years and made a real difference in the lives of children across Kentucky. Phil is living on his houseboat and working as a fishing guide.

In Law Enforcement Division, Conservation Officer II Sammie Renfro also announced his retirement.

Bradley McCoy was recently hired to fill the vacant Conservation Education Program Leader in Northern Kentucky. Bradley's district will be composed of Trimble, Carroll, Gallatin, Henry, and Owen counties. Bradley is a former teacher in Carroll County and has just completed his Masters degree in Instructional Leadership from Northern Kentucky University.

Brenda Hill has joined the department as the Information Office Supervisor. Before assuming her new position Brenda was a Program Coordinator for the Public Assistance Office for the State of Kentucky. Brenda brings a wealth of experience to the position and we are proud to have her on board.

David McDonald has been hired as a Fish & Wildlife Technician. David will be working with the Salato Wildlife Education Center animal care team. David previously served as a Lieutenant in the Franklin County Fire Department and owner of Meadow-Brooke Farm.

In Engineering Division, Casey Stockton joins the department as a Fish and Wildlife Technician 1.

"Plan," continued

The commission has made several substantial regulatory revisions to remove barriers to young – and new – hunters. Beginning in the 2008 license year, youth under the age of 12 will no longer be required to first purchase a youth hunting license. Only youth between the ages of 12 and 15 will be required to purchase a youth hunting license.

Also, beginning July 1, young hunters who have not yet reached their 12th birthday will not be required to first complete a hunter education course.

Anyone may go on-line and request a one-year exemption to the hunter education certification requirement. This was a significant barrier to recruiting new hunters. As things were, it was legal for an 8 or 9-year old child to carry a rifle and hunt deer in the immediate company of an adult, but it was not legal for a 30-year-old adult to do the same thing.

Now, under the new guidelines, they can go online, request this exemption, and enjoy a mentored experience in the company of a hunter education certified adult. They will then have a year to work a hunter education course into their schedule.

Thank you for your continued support and participation in KDFWR's strategic planning process.

Bear research projects final reports due this fall

Final reports of two doctoral and one masters degree black bear studies through the University of Kentucky partially funded by KDFWR since 2002 are due this fall.

Fieldwork has concluded for both PhD projects. Those studies are expected to yield valuable information concerning population demographics, habitat use, reproduction, home range dynamics and movement patterns of bears in eastern Kentucky.

The incorporation of GPS radio collars into that study in 2005 should yield an extensive analysis of habitat use and selection by bears in this region.

The second PhD study focused on the social dimensions of Kentucky's recolonizing bear population as they relate to public perception and human-bear conflicts.

That research will also quantify and map human-related food sources and evaluate their impacts on the behavior and

ecology of bears in areas where nuisance activity is greatest.

That information will prove especially valuable as human-bear interactions continue to be a focus of management efforts in some localized areas. DNA microsatellite analysis will help examine kinship, dispersal patterns, and likely colonizing

sources of bears captured in Kentucky.

The most recent study began in 2006 and is a cooperative effort with the University of Kentucky and Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Primary research objectives are to provide estimates of population size and density of black bears

using DNA mark-recapture techniques.

Researchers will conclude their sampling this summer. A final report of these findings is expected in fall 2008.

Findings from all of these projects are expected to yield information critical to the current and future management of bears in Kentucky.



Boat ramp dedicated

The Frank Brown/American Legion Boat Ramp on the Kentucky River near Ravenna in Estill County was recently dedicated in recognition of former 12-year 6th District Commission Member Frank Brown's service to the sportsmen and sportswomen. Helping dedicate the ramp were current 6th District Commission Member Ron Toler, Brown and Estill County Judge-Executive Wallace Taylor.



Dove banding beginning in Migratory Bird Program



The fifth year of the mourning dove banding program is now underway as KDFWR personnel are baiting doves. Banding will begin July 1st and will extend through the end of August. The banding project is a critical component of the effort to address potentially declining populations of mourning doves around the country.

Last year, more than 1,600 mourning doves were banded at 49 sites across Kentucky. Each of the 5 regions of the state was asked to band doves and all did an excellent job exceeding banding targets. The Northeast Region led the way capturing and banding 450 birds.

To date, more than 10 thousand bands have been applied and 326 have been recovered. Most recoveries occurred in Kentucky but birds banded in Kentucky have also been recovered in Illinois,

Indiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas.

The greatest recorded movement was a Frankfort bird harvested in North Dakota. A 2006 Pike County recapture was banded at KDFWR Headquarters in 2004.

In addition to banding information, KDFWR staff collected wings from harvested mourning doves at various sites around the state in 2006.

Kentucky submitted about 3,000 wings to the 2006 wing bee. This was our second year of wing collections and the second year for a national wing bee. In 2006, 36,500 wings were examined from around the United States.

To date, wings submitted by Kentucky have come from collection barrels and check stations manned by KDFWR personnel. Next year, wings will come from barrels/check stations and from mail surveys to hunters similar to the way duck wings are collected.

The wing data provides valuable harvest information on age and sex ratios of harvested birds as well as information on the timing of nesting activities.

Many thanks to KDFWR field staff whose hard work has made the banding program so successful!

Remember Hunters for the Hungry when renewing your vehicle license

You can help feed the hungry and manage the state's deer herd for less than it costs to buy a gallon of gasoline. It's easy: Whenever you renew your truck or car license, you can donate an extra \$2 toward hunger relief programs, such as Hunters for the Hungry. That's a small price to pay for such a worthy cause.

Last year, legislators approved a bill sponsored by state Sen. Richie Sanders, R-Franklin, to allow county clerks to collect \$2 to help fund hunger relief programs. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife disperses the money.

Now we need your help to spread the word about this beneficial and worthwhile effort. Although our law enforcement officers have taken informational posters to every county clerk's office in the state, we still need employees to be aware of the program and tell their friends and family about it.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife has enjoyed a long association with programs like Hunters for the Hungry, which helps control deer populations by processing venison donated by hunters. Part of the law enacted last year bonds this relationship by requiring the department to set aside at least \$25,000 a year for hunger relief efforts.

The next time you renew your license, add \$2 to your bill and help end hunger in Kentucky.



Native walleye progeny stocked in Barren River

The Department stocked 20,000 fingerling walleye in the upper Barren River – above Barren River Lake in May. During the past five years, fisheries research biologists discovered a surviving population of the native walleye strain in the Rockcastle River, located in southeastern Kentucky.

These fish are the progeny of our “native strain” walleye. Remember our state record walleye (21 lb. 8 oz.) caught in 1958 is most likely a product of this native strain of walleye. This fish is also in the books as the third largest walleye caught in the world!

Native walleye all but disappeared from the state due to poor water quality and the construction of dams, which flooded spawning shoals and covered others with sediment.

Brood fish, collected from the Rockcastle River are being utilized to produce native fingerling walleye to help bolster this remaining population, as well as, attempting to expand the native strain of walleye back into habitats where they once thrived.

The primary purpose of the stockings of native strain walleye into the upper Barren River is to establish another river population of native walleye outside the Rockcastle River and a sanctuary to maintain their genetic purity. A secondary benefit will be the sport fishery they will create.

Stockings of native strain walleye are

occurring only in locations where there is no possibility of hybridization with the Lake Erie strain of walleye that have been stocked in many of Kentucky's lakes and reservoirs. Hybridization could result in the complete loss of this native strain of walleye from Kentucky.

Native strain walleye in the upper Barren River will be closely monitored to follow growth rates and reproductive success. The first year of stocking 1.5 inch walleye recently took place on May 24.

Results immediately following stocking look promising as biologists observed walleye that were just released feeding on creek chubs in the upper Barren River. If all goes well, native strain walleye will again thrive in the upper Barren River. For more information, please contact Dave Dreves at (502) 564-3400.

New state record white catfish



Oldham County resident Donnie Gaines caught the new state record white catfish in Shelby County's Guist Creek Lake on June 13 while fishing for a Kentucky Afield television show segment with show host Tim Farmer. The fish weighed 1.85 pounds. Gaines caught the fish on a green, 3-inch tube jig. The television segment will air June 30.

Skaggs, Grayson complete SPI Administrative Officers course

On Thursday May 10, 2007, Lieutenant Richard Skaggs and Sergeant William “Buddy” Grayson became the first members of the Law Enforcement Division to graduate from the Administrative Officer's course at the Southern Police Institute (SPI).

Lt. Skaggs and Sgt. Grayson enrolled at SPI on February 12, 2007. Their class, the 117th AOC, included 57 of law enforcement officers from throughout the United States and from several foreign countries.

Lt. Skaggs and Sgt. Grayson chose to take the graduate school track of courses and both individuals made the Dean's List for their academic achievements.



"Travis," continued

Don McCormick, a former Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commissioner, said Travis once considered retirement, but couldn't bear the thought of going through with it.

"Doug submitted his letter of resignation back in 1988 during a special state government retirement window," McCormick said. "I was sitting at my desk one day and Doug came in to see me. We chit-chatted a few minutes and I finally asked him what was up. He said, 'Commissioner, this job is my life. This is my family.'

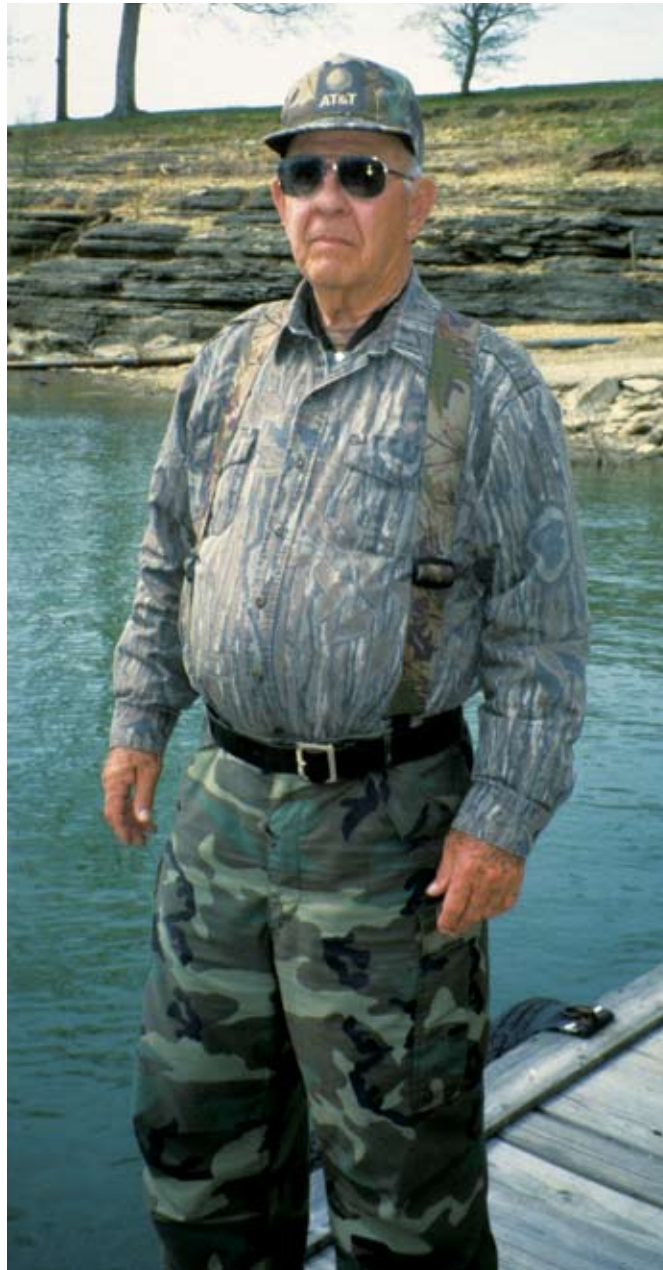
"His chin started quivering a bit and he wanted to know if he could get his letter back," McCormick continued. "He said, 'I don't want to do anything else and I don't want to leave.'"

Charles Martin, chairman of the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission, said he was in the fifth grade when Travis came to his school to talk about conservation. Travis made an impression. "He had a special relationship with children that cannot be replicated," Martin said. "He would motivate kids like nothing I've ever seen. I don't think this state will ever have a conservation education leader like him again."

Mike Boatwright, who served 24 years as the western district representative on the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission, said Travis had a remarkable career.

"There never has been or will be another employee more dedicated to Fish and Wildlife than Doug Travis," Boatwright said. "Fish and Wildlife was his life. He was always there to give advice to young employees. He kept them heading in the right direction.

"As much as he loved Department of



Fish and Wildlife," Boatwright continued, "he loved the kids more. He knew the kids were the future of Fish and Wildlife. He taught them the importance of conservation and hunting and fishing."

"He taught so many kids," echoed Dick Hudson, former Camp Currie superintendent. "He could flip a penny into the air and take a .22 rifle and shoot a hole right through the center of it. He was really good to work with. He loved those kids. And he was my good friend."

"When I came to work for the department in 1949, Doug was already here," said former Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Arnold Mitchell. "Doug did an excellent job with those kids. He looked after them just like they were his own. And he was an excellent employee. When he started a job, you knew the job would get done. You could depend on him."

Travis' legacy will live on. Last December, a 4,118-acre wildlife management area in western Kentucky was named in his honor.

"Doug Travis defined fish and wildlife in Kentucky," said Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Dr. Jon Gassett. "For six decades, he was a shining example for generations of sportsmen and sportswomen throughout our Commonwealth. His honesty, integrity, and passion for conservation education will leave a mark on the Department of Fish and Wildlife that will influence and outlast the efforts of those following in his footsteps. We are deeply saddened by the loss of Doug, and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife family will miss him dearly."

Friends say Travis won't be forgotten. "Doug loved the Department of Fish and Wildlife. He was proud to wear that uniform," Knight said. "The department

was lucky to have an ambassador like him. Who's going to take Doug Travis' place? I don't know - he was so important to so many young people."

Survivors include his wife of 27 years, Patty Travis; a sister, Iris Ann Shiver, Gallatin, Tenn.; four daughters, Shannon Mills, Bowling Green, Ky., Julie Lowery, Brentwood, Tenn., Barbara Butler, Nolensville, Tenn., and Peggy Denham, Cleveland, Tenn.; a son, Leslie Adams, Paducah, Ky.; and eight grandchildren.